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**Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation Approves Nearly $1.8 Million for Grant Projects**

*Funding to Advance Racial Justice in Health and Community-Based Mental Health*

**BOSTON (Jan. 17, 2024)** – The [Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation](https://bluecrossmafoundation.org/), a nonprofit grantmaking and research organization, today announced nearly $1.8 million in grants as it expands investments in two key grant programs focused on racial justice in health and community-based mental health. Since it was established in 2001, the Foundation has granted more than $84 million.

“The Foundation is making these vital funding commitments to improve the health care experience for communities of color and increase access to community-based mental health services, two areas of great concern,” said Audrey Shelto, President and CEO of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation. “Our grant partners have made significant strides since initial funding support and we look forward to successful outcomes in 2024 and beyond.”

**Racial Justice in Health grants**

The Foundation expanded its [*Racial Justice in Health*](https://www.bluecrossmafoundation.org/grant/racial-justice-health) program to a third funding year, enabling grant partners to continue building their capacity and expertise in health care advocacy as they aim to advance policies and practices that promote racial justice and equity in health care delivery. The following organizations led by people of color will receive $72,250 each for their respective initiatives:

* **Asian Women for Health,** a peer-led, statewide network based in Somerville dedicated to advancing the health and well-being of Asian women, including cancer survivors and immigrants, through education, advocacy and support. AWFH will work on implementation of the recently passed state Data Equity Law as well as work to improve language access and inclusion in health policies.
* **Brookview House**, a Black and Latinx woman-led nonprofit organization in Dorchester that provides support services and programs that confront the root causes of homelessness and poverty for mothers who are low-income and works for justice, equity and systemic change for families with low-income. Brookview will work with young people and focus on the intersection of substance use disorders and oral health.
* **GreenRoots**, an organization that bridges environmental justice and public health by engaging the most impacted residents in the highly industrial neighborhoods of Chelsea and East Boston. GreenRoots will continue to work on policies to improve air quality and other environmental health issues that impact the health and health outcomes in their communities.
* **La Colaborativa**, which empowers Latinx immigrants in the Chelsea area to enhance the social and economic health of the community and to hold institutional decision-makers accountable to the community. La Colaborativa will work on health care enrollment and efforts to expand access to health care for immigrants.
* **Somali Development Center**, a Roxbury-based nonprofit providing educational and social services to refugees and immigrants in Greater Boston who are primarily from Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan and Djibouti. The center will work on efforts to improve oral health care and increase health care access for newly arrived refugees and immigrants.
* **The Welcome Project**, a Somerville-based nonprofit organization that builds the collective power of immigrants to shape and participate in community decisions through programming for youth and adults and families. The Welcome Project will work to advance efforts for equitable, healthy and safe working conditions for immigrant workers as a means to improve community health.

“We are continuing our *Racial Justice in Health* grants for a third year to further our vision for a more diverse and effective health advocacy movement that incorporates the voices of those who experience inequity every day,” said Jacquie Anderson, the Foundation’s Senior Director of Grantmaking.

**Advancing Community-Driven Mental Health grants**

The Foundation also awarded a second round of grants through its [*Advancing Community-Driven Mental Health*](https://www.bluecrossmafoundation.org/grant/advancing-community-driven-mental-health) program to five nonprofit organizations that are training non-clinical staff to offer support to clients experiencing mild to moderate mental health distress and problems of everyday living. The following organizations received $150,000 each to continue their projects to improve access to community-based mental health services and expand the behavioral health workforce:

* **Boston Senior Home Care**, which is working to improve access to community-based mental health services through a supportive housing program, Supporting Connections, in Boston’s Dorchester neighborhood, including training tenant service coordinators.
* **Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee**, whose Journey to Hope program focuses on underserved individuals including low-wage earners, those with limited English-language proficiency, people with disabilities, seniors and residents of subsidized housing.
* **Quincy Asian Resources Inc.**, whose Life Balance program is training its family and community services coordinators to support the mental health challenges of clients who have an immigrant background, typically speak Chinese or Vietnamese, and have experienced acculturation stress.
* **Stavros Center for Independent Living**, which is implementing the Project Management Plus (PM+) model with a program called Take Charge to support people living with disabilities in western Massachusetts who have difficulty getting mental health services due to limited access to the internet and transportation.
* **The Community Builders Inc.**, whose Village Connections program is focusing on individuals with low incomes and often in need of mental health care who live in family-designated affordable housing in Boston, Mashpee and Worcester.

In addition, the Foundation is providing a total of $270,161 to two technical assistance partners, **The Family Van** and **Partners In Health**, for the development and implementation of the *Advancing Community-Driven Mental Health* grant program.

**Special Initiatives grants**

The Foundation also continued to provide one-time grants through its [*Special Initiatives*](https://www.bluecrossmafoundation.org/grant/special-initiatives) program, which is for organizations to pilot or launch a new project that empowers communities to advance health equity. The Foundation is providing a total of $300,000 to six nonprofit organizations that are working to improve health care access across Massachusetts.

* **Girls Inc. of the Valley**, for a project that will advance health care access and health equity by creating new low-barrier, no-cost mental health services for BIPOC youth from low-income families, integrated within the Holyoke-based organization’s programs.
* **Northeast Arc**, to support a statewide telehealth service, StationMD, that will increase health care access and improve outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities served by the Danvers-based organization and other human service agencies.
* **Saheli Inc.**, a Burlington-based nonprofit that will create a cultural competency training program to increase the capacity of frontline hospital staff to recognize domestic and family violence occurring in the South Asian and Arab communities, a growing population in Massachusetts.
* **UMass Amherst**, for a community collaboration between the university’s Elaine Marieb College of Nursing and the Bay Area Neighborhood Council, that will address racial disparities in maternal health by bringing health education and resources to the majority Black and Hispanic Bay neighborhood in Springfield.
* **Vital CxNs**, to support a pilot project that will convene health providers, city government and residents who will create a roadmap for diabetes and cardiovascular disease prevention efforts, focused on communities of color in Boston’s Dorchester and Roxbury neighborhoods.
* **Worcester RISE**, for a project that will provide cross-cultural and trauma-informed training for behavioral health providers to better serve new migrant arrivals, including education on psychological first aid and mentorship programs for community health staff, resettlement case managers and outreach workers.

**About the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation**

The mission of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation is to ensure equitable access to health care for all those in the Commonwealth who are economically, racially, culturally or socially marginalized. The Foundation was established in 2001 with an initial endowment from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. It operates separately from the company and is governed by its own Board of Directors. For more information, visit [www.bluecrossmafoundation.org](http://www.bluecrossmafoundation.org).

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